
Title: The Wraith - Vol. III

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I continued to struggle on
through the wilderness,
my feet sliding into
inches of fresh snow with
every step. My pace was
slow and staggering. I had
no direction in my mind,
just eyes peeled for the
sight of that luminous
foggy trail. Bitter
breezes sailed through the
trees constantly, hitting
me from all angles.
Beneath my thick furs, I
was covered in leather
padding wrapped in yet
more furs. Beneath that
were tight linens tucked
into my boots and gloves.
I was used to the
freezing temperatures and
knew how to keep them
out, but in the mountains,
where winds gathered
speed as they whipped
through the deep valleys,
even I was succumbing to
the pain of the cold. The
steel greatsword, heavy
on my back, was not
helping either.

Nothing much changed all
day, other than that I
progressively shrank into
myself, residing to the
fact that I would simply
wander these frozen
wastes until I collapsed
and died; dead wraith or
not. I wasn't even sure
I'd be able to fight the
monster alone when I was
fit and healthy, not least
now when I was ragged,
tired, cold, weak and
hungry. But what else
could I do? I didn't know

my way out the
mountains, even if I was
coward enough to run.
And yes, I'd thought
about it. But then, things
changed. It began with a
bang. A horrible, low
rumble that emanated
from far away in the
mountains, shaking the
very ground around me
and knocking snow from
the branches overhead.

It lasted only a second,
but was like nothing I'd
ever heard before. Then,
on the far side of the
ravine, through the wiry
trees, I saw cracks
emerge in the snow, like
splits in an ice-bound lake
struck with a pick-axe.
With a groan, the snow
started to slide, slowly
at first, but quickly
picking up pace. It was
crashing towards the
deepest part of the
valley — exactly where I
stood. Heaving my stiff
legs through the dense
snow, I ambled frantically
towards the other side
of the valley, fear driving
my frozen body to move
faster than it should. I
went up higher and higher
until I could go no
further; blocked by steep
rock walls. Looking back, I
saw snow swarm where I
once stood, burying the
land deep enough to cover
me several times over.
The force of the drift
had brought down trees
and uncovered a great
expanse of bare rock on
the cliffs of the valley's
far side.
Whatever had just
happened transformed the
landscape. It was as if I
was standing in a totally
different place. But that
was not what interested
me most. Down in the pit

of the valley, where the
freshly moved snow now
lay, I could see something
moving. Ducking behind a
tree, I peered around to
watch.

A lone wraith was moving
around frantically in the
canyon below, similar to a
fly trapped in a jar. It
was slashing wildly,
dashing from
tree-to-tree, cutting
through them with ease.
It was hard to make out
its features, so far away
was it, but it was
definitely a wraith. About
the size of a man and
floating a foot or so
above the ground, it left
glowing trails of
frosty-blue dust in its
wake. After a moment of
what seemed to be sheer
panic, it let out a shriek,
a piercing almost metallic
noise, before darting
away, dragging its low
slung claws through the
dusty, unsettled snow.
With haste, I followed,
just fast enough to
outrun the dispersal of
its trail. Walking through
the mist was like walking
through the heart of
winter itself. The air was
so cold it dragged deep
into my lungs and felt
like every breath was
scaring them. I could feel
ice forming on the hairs
above my lip. I took to a
path beside the wraith's
trail, I wouldn't last long
within it, and I was
already on my last legs
as it was.

Pushing forward took
every scrap of energy I
had, but I knew this
would be my only chance.
The wraith had moved
far, its path leading me
out of the sprawling

valley and to the shores
of a great frozen lake
that stood between three
looming mountain peaks.
The frantic trail had
slowly become calmer. The
darting from side-to-side
had stopped as the
beast's focus seemed to
have narrowed. The trails
were also thicker and
more densely packed, spun
with more and more
floating specks of
shimmering blue dust. I
think it had slowed down.